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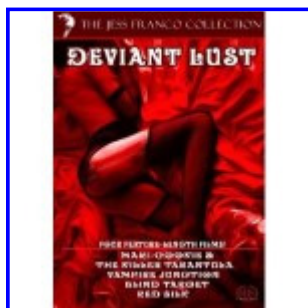
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# [Deviant Lust : The Jess Franco Collection \(SRS\)](#)

By

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“Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula” alone is worth whatever this costs at your local DVD retailer or online retailer or wherever the hell you buy your movies from. It’s one of the strangest things I’ve ever seen and also one of the strangest things I’ve ever seen come forth from the mind of Jess Franco; both of these assertions are saying A LOT. I’ve watched some pretty fucking weird-ass movies in my time and Jess Franco has made A BUNCH of movies in his career, most of them strange to one degree or another. You just sort of expect the unusual or downright

abnormal (or, as this collection's title suggests, deviant) whenever you sit down to a Franco feature. But this one takes the cake. It's not Franco's strongest film – in my experience that goes to “A Virgin Among the Living Dead”, though since he's made in excess of 200, maybe closer to 300, pictures, my, relatively-speaking, limited exposure to his oeuvre hardly makes me a Franco expert. But is among his most singular works. Even the film credits themselves announce that it is “AN OUTRAGEOUS FILM BY JESS FRANCO” or something to that effect. They do use the word “Outrageous.” Anyway, a brief narrated prologue lets us know that at some point in history, some poor girl was raped by some aristocratic or upper class bastard or some such and, as luck would have it, a tarantula crawled right up her twat post-forced-coitus. Cut to modern times and we have an exotic dancer who employs a spider theme in her act and who likes to meet women at the club to take home for lovemaking – and more. The fact that the stripper's companion at home is presented with a big, blatantly fake spider with low-tech FX to give it a human, female face only makes the surprise that much more insane. Web is strung everywhere. A naked man is tangled up in it; he spends the entire picture hung in the webs and occasionally saying random shit. Mari-Cookie's first victim (at least the first one we meet in the picture) gets the web-hanging treatment, as well. Meanwhile, the beautiful female sheriff whose official uniform apparently involves nothing more than a bikini bottom (and gun belt) from the waist down is poking around, trying to track down the spider woman's lair and solve the secret of the local disappearances. Those are the basics. More plot than you get in a lot of Franco films. But – again, like most Franco movies – it's not really the plot we're concerned with. What drives “Mari-Cookie and the Killer Tarantula” is the bit-by-bit unfolding of extreme weirdness, the film's ability to one-up itself again and again in extreme peculiarity. My eyes were riveted to the screen in morbid fascination while my brain was punching itself in the face. Soon, my brain was trying to gnaw itself free from my spinal cord. It's that wow – if you're a cineweirdness head. And I am that. This is truly cinema strange and, despite its basement budget – or, really, in part because of it – it's one of the most fascinating forays into Francoland I've ever encountered. It's the best thing going in this collection if you're into pure Franco fucked-upness. “Vampire Junction” is another oddity, though not as peculiar as “Mari-Cookie ...” In this one, Lina Romay (who seems to appear in all, or at least most, of these latter day Franco efforts and with whom Franco has been fascinated for decades – she

was the star of his “Female Vampire”) goes to a strange town in an attempt to track down a doctor whom she wants to interview. That plot idea never really goes anywhere since Franco is more fascinated with the village itself and its distinctive vampires. First, the village: It’s anachronistic as all get-out, as though the 20th century fused itself somehow with the Old West – like the town exists in a weird pocket of time-space in which there’s a twist in the timeline. Then there’s the vampires who can materialize at will and do all kinds of teleporty things. They even bring Romay’s character violent and sexual dreams that start bleeding over into real life. This one is about mood and strangeness more than plot, so Franco fans should feel comfortable. It isn’t like naked vampires are a new thing for him, though he gets credit for taking the idea in a different direction. “Blind Target” is surprisingly story oriented, though it lacks none of the softcore girl-on-girl action we’re accustomed to from the watching Franco’s immense canon of films. In this one, a woman who years before left her Central American home for a successful career in the U.S. has returned to her homeland, the author of a politically-charged book that has far from created warm and fuzzy feelings in the powers that be in her country of origin. In no time at all, she’s caught up in shadowy politics, held captive by a corrupt law enforcement agent and his torture-happy assistant (Romay). It’s not the torture porn variety of torture, though, just so you know. This is more along the lines of electric shock and other such niceties. But these elements are not the center of the film. It turns out, the authorities in her homeland – or at least these particular officials – are interested in more than her political opinions. Is it possible there’s more to our heroine’s background than we first suspect? And just what does her mysterious background offer these bad guys? What do they want from her? It’s actually a pretty interesting espionage/political thriller. And leave it to Franco to take a genre like that and turn it into a low budget kung-fist movie in the climactic final third of the film. Seriously. If you’re this far into the review and you’re still going what-the-fuck then either (a) you just can’t adapt to Francoland and should probably leave now, or (b) you’re excited and mesmerized by the one-of-a-kind celluloid expressions that are the films of Franco, in which case, nice to meet you. OK, we’re down to the last film, and also, IMHO, the least film of this compilation. “Red Silk” seems to be intended as a comedy thriller of sorts, with a pair of female private eyes doing more scheming to snatch-and-grab money than they do solving mysteries. “Red Silk” doesn’t make a lot of sense (it’s Franco), there’s plenty of softcore lesbianism (it’s

Franco), there's even a little misogyny (it's Franco) – but all this adds up to is that “Red Silk” is a fairly generic Franco film. By itself, I wouldn't waste my time, but as part of a collection, think of it as an OK bonus feature. Mari-Cookie and her tarantula are enough by themselves to warrant a look at this one. It just keeps getting weirder and weirder and just when you think you're jaw can't possibly hang any lower, the movie gets even WEIRDER and your jaw finds new depths to which to drop.

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